

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO...
The Socialist Party of Great Britain,
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

A SOCIALIST MESSAGE TO LABOUR VOTERS

You are still in a state of elation after your land-slide victory at the General Election. The Labour Party now has power to put into operation the proposals outlined in its Manifesto. With such a massive majority, is there anything to stop them? They will fail you again.

Look at the world in which we live. We say the world, and not Great Britain, because this country is part of a world system; it is not even master in its own house. What happens in other countries can have a marked effect on what any government can do.

We live in a world of capitalism which has certain features. The means of wealth production and distribution are owned by a small minority - the capitalist class - whose lives bear no relation to the lives of the overwhelming majority of people - you and us. Our lives are determined by the size of our wages or salaries. It is we who run society from top to bottom, whether in the productive or service sector. Capitalism exploits us. We produce a greater quantity of wealth than we receive back in wages or salaries. The extra value we create - surplus value - is divided within the capitalist class into Rent, Interest and Profit.

Capitalism is a commodity producing system, dominated by market forces and the irresistible drive of production for profit. It is from this economic base that certain social problems arise - poverty, unemployment, housing, insecurity etc: these are endemic to the capitalist system. This system the Labour Government will operate, and it brought about the defeat of past Labour and other governments.

Your idea of "*socialism*" based upon State ownership and nationalisation which was just another way of running capitalism, failed you. At one time the Labour Party was proud to be known as the party which stood for working class interests. This has now been jettisoned, and it is now the party which has taken up and will develop many aspects of Thatcher's capitalism.

Labour talks of uniting the nation. *"I want a Britain that is one Nation ... The struggles of public versus private, bosses versus workers, capitalist class versus workers, are seen to have no relevance in our world"*. (Blair). The Labour Manifesto stated . . . *"At the workplace, our aim is*

partnership, not conflict between employers and employees". This will not prevent you being sacked or made redundant.

The aim of the capitalist class is to maximise profits by exploiting workers to the limit. Your aim is to counter this, to reduce insecurity, poverty etc. and improve your standard of life. These two opposing aims cannot be reconciled. They are part of the class struggle, which is denied by Blair. This struggle brought about the collapse of the Major government, as it did the governments of Attlee, Wilson and Callaghan. The insoluble endemic problems of capitalism will also bring about the defeat of the Blair government.

The honeymoon is over and you are back to normal life. In opposition, the Labour Party could snipe at pretty well anything but it now has to govern. So far it hasn't done much of significance other than setting up some 80 committees to investigate certain problems. When these committees report it will have to take decisions. Almost denying its freedom to act, it has accepted the Tory government's brake on public spending, but health, education and public sector wage settlements will have to be dealt with. The Manifesto said "... any unreasonable public sector pay demands" will be resisted (p.13). You know, and we know, whose view of what is unreasonable will be accepted.

Blair, recently speaking in New York to leading American business men said that he would make Labour the "*natural party of business*", and that by the next General Election people would view the party "*just as much the party of business as the Conservatives, if not more*". Is this what you want? Is this what you fought for during the General Election?

"This time there can be no alibis. Labour has no alibi left. If it fails to produce the goods, full-employment, all-round national prosperity, international concord, health, homes and happiness for the whole people, it can fall back on no excuse".

(Garry Allighan, Labour MP.
Daily Mail 30 July 1945 after the thumping Labour victory).

So in some respects, 1997 is like 1945 all over again. Despite their majority in 1945, Labour failed to deliver the goods and they lost the General Election of 1951. We assert that history will repeat itself.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain does not claim that it can run capitalism for the benefit of everybody. It certainly cannot be run for the benefit of those who are forced to work because they need food, shelter and security. Capitalism's endemic problems are caused by the system of production for profit.

Our aim is to abolish capitalism and in its place put a way of life where production is solely for use. Where the means of production and distribution will be commonly owned and democratically controlled. A system where each will give according to ability and where each will take according to need. Such a society does not depend upon political leaders. It can only be brought about when a majority of men and women realise that capitalism has had its day and are conscious of the need to take political action to usher in a new world, where co-operation will replace competition, and where common interest will replace the class struggle.

Labour's future is tied up with capitalism, but your future should be with us.

Labour's Capitalist Friends

Tony Blair wants to open up the Internet to every British school. He has asked for help from the Microsoft Billionaire, Bill Gates. What Mr Gates will get out of the consultancy is anyone's guess. However he is not short of a bob or two. Mr Gates is worth \$38 billion and still counting. He is one of the richest capitalists in the world. And he wants to live like one. His \$50 million mansion outside Seattle is nearing completion.

Next time Mr Blair preaches to the American capitalist class how he wants to be the friend of business he will most probably stay at Mr Gates' residence and conveniently shut his eyes to the poverty and squalor of the rest of America; an America inhabited not with Billionaires like Mr Gates but with the working class who created Mr Gates' wealth in the first place.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD ECONOMY

The increased production due to the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries led to a growth in international trade and the beginning of the world economy. Industrial manufacturing wealth with its increasing demand for raw materials and the pressure to expand its market was the precursor of the multi-national company (MNC), the company with production units sited in different countries and therefore under the influence of various capitalist governments.

Prior to 1914 the world economy was more open than any period since. International trade was becoming more important relative to the Gross Domestic Product level of the developed countries. In 1913 international trade in Britain formed 44.7% of its GDP and today it is reputed to be 40%. France and Germany show similar figures. In its heyday British monopoly of international trade and foreign investment dominated what was then an embryonic world market; a world market possessing all the key features of its future development.

The expansion of the world economy up to 1914 was foreseen by Marx and Engels over 60 years before:

The need for a constantly expanding market for its product chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. ... it compels all nations on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, ie., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word it creates a world after its own image. The Communist Manifesto: SPGB Centenary edition pp.63-64.

The Gold Standard and the World Economy.

The Gold Standard for 30 years up to 1914 regulated money and its exchange rates. Why was the Gold Standard after World War One never revived, except for a few years, if it had made possible a more open commercial system? It failed because countries with favourable trade and importing gold in payment failed to put that gold into circulation as they should have done under the Gold Standard scheme. It was their low price level that brought about their import of gold. Putting gold into

circulation would have raised prices and lowered their foreign sales. Meanwhile other countries were running out of gold.

After World War One there was a period of widespread commercial turbulence with great competition between the major capitalist powers leading to deflation, devaluations and comprehensive capital controls. Foreign trade between 1929 and 1933 fell by 2/3rds. This intense competition led up to the World War Two after which the USA became dominant.

Some commentators claimed after World War Two that the growth of international trade was based on the theories of J.M. Keynes. Likewise the various decisions under the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade were said to have caused the growth in international trade. However the growth in international trade after 1945 was due to the need for the capitalist economies to replace and expand the resources destroyed by war. Keynes's theories have been repudiated by subsequent history with the recurring recessions since the late 1960's. The GATT did not cause the expansion of the world economy. It signified that regulated exchange rates, including fixed rates and fluctuating rates, like physical control of imports and exports, were a restraint on trade, hence the continuing rounds of GATT.

From 1945 onwards the growth of international trade as a proportion of the GDP of the developed countries has increased. In 1960 foreign direct investment by the developed countries has grown as a proportion of their GDP and this means that foreign direct investment is of growing significance in the development of the world economy.

The growth of exports between 1960 and 1990 was faster than the growth of output and resulted in greater multi-national company activity.

By the 1990's there were 37,000 MNC's with 170,000 affiliated organisations. Ninety per cent had their investments in the developed world, with 24,000 (70%) based in the major OECD countries. They are loosely coupled networks, aligned but semi-autonomous units articulated within a specific national environment although internationally orientated. MNC's are significant in North America, Europe and Japan where 70-75% of value added is produced.

Political developments within the World Economy

There is a school of thought that some MNC's are developing into transnational companies (TNC's) where:

vast unaccountable corporations ... switch billions of dollars of investment between continents at a stroke. The universal oligarchs dictate terms to trembling statesmen whose powers over economics has been reduced to mere servicing. Neil Ascherson, *Independent* 12.1.97.

Since 1970 the UN Economic and Social Council has attempted to draft a code of conduct for transnational corporations. It still has to appear which is not surprising for according to Hirst and Thompson, *Globalisation in Question* there is little evidence that they exist. The nearest thing being the large multi-nationals.

The ultimate power in the world society is political and TNC's would have to have a political base to promote their interests. Their only other alternative would be to develop their own coercive armed forces which would require a geographic base. The major world powers would not permit that. A case of academics and journalists watching too much James Bond.

MNC's will undoubtedly gain in number and influence but they will be regulated by political will.

Investment on the World Market

Seventy five per cent of accumulated stock and 60% of the flow of foreign direct investment is located in North America, Europe and Japan. These areas have 14% of the world's population. The world economy is still made up of developing countries while investment has followed market signals, and remained within the developed countries.

Marx recognised:

If capital is sent abroad this is not done because it absolutely could not be applied at home, but because it can be employed at a higher rate of profit in a foreign country. Capital Volume 3, Chap. XV (III).

Hirst and Thompson point out that:

The level of FDI in the developing world is closely tied to the economic cycle in the advanced countries with depressions in the First World stimulating a flow of capital to key developing countries. (loc. cit.) p.117.

The bulk of investment is within the developed world, The developing countries' sweated labour is not to blame for declining earning and jobs in the advanced capitalist countries. The capitalist does not seek just low wages, for low wages may be linked to low productivity. He seeks high profit with security.

The Working Class and the World Market

When the Left attacks the capitalist for investing abroad arguing investment should be in Britain it is demonstrating its nationalism and support for those capitalists who want protectionism and fear the competition from large capital formations. Workers should recognise that it is not in their interests to give support to any section of the capitalist class and their political representatives. The working class should become as internationalist in their view of themselves as a revolutionary class just as the capitalist is when he invests purely for maximum profit and security. The workers should look at their class position which is international, an international class struggle for socialism.

The major capitalists are doing very well according to Bill Jamieson:

"We now have the second largest global investment in the world, extending to more than £1,700 billion, 2/3rds of which lies outside the European union and earns UK companies and institutions each year more than the entire cost of our social security system. Sunday Telegraph 26.1.97;

No matter how much capitalism changes it basically remains the same - it exploits the working class to create surplus value, some of which is formed into new capital to increase the competitiveness of industry and the national economy.

As long as capitalism lasts that will not change. No doubt more Multi National companies will be formed, and some will be in the undeveloped countries. Governments will offer inducements to invest to enable the MNC's to over-step trade barriers, but despite what some may think political power will control, MNC's will continue to seek locations that give the highest security to maximise profits; and political control provides security.

What does the future hold for the working class?

In the developed countries they will be trained to be pliant and adaptable. A constantly changing prospect - training for a new job interspersed with periods of unemployment.

In the undeveloped countries with no industrial historical background and experience, with trade unions in their infancy, the working class will be very much at the mercy of the capitalist class, as were workers in the past in the developed countries.

Therefore disruption can be anticipated in developed and undeveloped countries. A world economy with or without free trade offers the world's working class what they have always experienced - war, want and insecurity.

Over 100 years ago, Marx proposed the solution , Socialism, and called on the workers of the world to unite to end the class system.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN
of 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road,
London N12 8SB,

Has no connection with any other political party including the party using the same name based at 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN. Persons wishing to send donations, subscriptions etc. should make their cheques payable to **"SOCIALIST STUDIES"** and send them to our address, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB as above.

WHO ARE THE SOCIALISTS?

Issue 4 of **Revolutionary Socialist Network** published a letter from a correspondent claiming to represent *"Welsh Socialists"*. This is a small political organisation who do not agree with the SPGB policy of examining applicants for membership in order to assess the extent of their understanding of the socialist case. The writer sees this as *"the theological approach to socialism"*. He goes on to say that: *"They've (SPGB) progressed not one iota in nearly 100 years ... the endless quoting from Marx, Engels ... is a million miles from the reasons most people want to overthrow capitalism ... there are millions of people who are fed up with the 'system', who are republicans, who understand the bosses v. workers relationship, but who wouldn't join a socialist organisation if you paid them ... once we work out how to reach these people, we've broken the stranglehold of theological socialism"*.

The Membership Test.

The letter gives little real information on the *"Welsh Socialists"* but it seems they favour *"direct action"* rather than the political activity advocated by the SPGB. We are also told that they are concentrating *"on building grassroots community resistance here in Wales"*. What we see today of community resistance are protest actions against the Newbury by-pass, the second runway at Manchester airport and other similar protests. These attract a motley mix of individuals who join in because they are against one or other particular project, not because they are fed up with capitalism and still less because they see the need to abolish it. In this respect they are no different to supporters of the capitalist political parties who think capitalism can be reformed to serve the interests of the working class.

It was because of their experience in the Social Democratic Federation that the founders of the SPGB introduced the membership test. They had seen that the SDF policy of admitting all comers had led to the organisation being swamped by supporters of various reforms so that it had lost any genuine claim to be revolutionary and Socialist. By admitting only those with Socialist understanding, we have ensured that the Socialist message is alive today. In contrast the broad church policy of admitting all comers has led to a widespread and devastating confusion in which the term Socialism has lost its real meaning all together and been used to imply mere variants of the capitalist system,

such as the state capitalism of the former Soviet Union. The fact that not many workers have yet accepted the Socialist position is no reason to dilute the message. What earthly use is it if non-Socialists call themselves Socialists? We have seen enough of the damage this causes.

Relevance of Marx's Theories

The theoretical works of Marx supported by Engels are still very relevant to the SPGB because for the first time the true nature of the capitalist system and its place in social evolution was revealed in full and put on a scientific basis. Marx pointed out why the capitalist system can never be made to operate in the interests of the working class and why it cannot be reformed piecemeal into socialism. We hold that the revolutionary views argued by Marx and Engels have stood the test of time and that our work for Socialism is basically in line with them while taking into account the working class experience and technological change which has occurred since. The works of Marx and Engels also provide a guide to the unsoundness and lack of understanding of reformist and direct action organisations such as the Welsh Socialists.

Who are the millions of revolutionaries?

The idea that there is a vast army of revolutionary workers ready to take over society, but betrayed by the treachery of leaders is still widely held by left wing groups whether parliamentary or supporters of networking and direct action. The ruling class know better than this. If there really were such numbers accepting the socialist position, the whole political atmosphere would be different. The capitalists would be trying in vain to buy off the workers and not, as they are doing now, trying to reduce the burden of taxation for capitalists, sacking workers in the state sector like teachers, council workers and doctors, attacking the workers' standard of living, and blaming them for many of the problems found in capitalism.

The capitalist Labour government currently produces its anti-working class policies in the confidence that Socialism poses no threat. Labour can pursue capitalist policies because a majority of workers voted for them at the last election. The current weakness of working class politics, a politics that can only be socialist, is shown in the support millions of workers continually give to the Labour Party, Tories and SDP. Socialists are optimists, not pessimists, but we are also realists and in our propagation of Socialist ideas we find a great deal of resistance by

workers to our case. There is no magic button to press to win over workers to the socialist case but instead a hard struggle. The battle for Socialism was never going to be easy and this is reflected in the current political climate which is hostile to Socialism and, likewise, in the present size of our party.

As for leaders the SPGB has none. A party consisting of members who know what they want and how to get it does not need to appoint leaders to lead them to Socialism. The betrayals of the working class by leaders in fact have their origins in soliciting votes from all comers, rather than adopting the SPGB policy. Without having sought a mandate to abolish capitalism, Labour and other reformist politicians when in power have had no alternative but to administer capitalism in the only way they can, in the interests of the capitalist class. Nor would it be any different if power could be seized by direct action, by-passing parliament. The machinery of government in the control of the capitalist state would be no match for insurrectionists. The myth of the Russian revolution still casts a dark shadow over the political thinking of immature workers who see in marches, violence, chants and slogans a path to Socialism. The only path it leads to is the cemetery or dictatorship.

Incidentally, why is it so hard for the Welsh Socialists to reach these '*millions of socialists*', forming it would seem 90% or more of the working class? It cannot be because of the stranglehold exerted by our small party of '*theological socialists*'. If there are that many, how can they avoid making contact with them? It is our experience that visitors to our public meetings contain a much higher proportion of members of the self-styled revolutionary parties than are present in the population at large. So where are these millions? The answer alas is nowhere; they are a myth! More's the pity.

Republicanism

Changing the monarchy to a republic would make no difference to the position of workers and we are entitled to ask what evidence is there that supporters of a republic are more revolutionary than monarchists, as Welsh Socialists imply? There are plenty of republics in the world and all are capitalist, nor is the system any less viciously run in these republican states. Just as many if not more republics have become dictatorships. There isn't even necessarily an absence of the religious mystique around the head of state in a republic. It can easily be created around whoever is

in office and many have done this successfully, such as Hitler and Stalin, and many more recent examples, particularly in Africa and Latin America.

The SPGB and the charge of "sectarianism".

The charge of *sectarianism*" is one that the SPGB has lived with throughout its existence. If there were indeed millions of revolutionaries around and we were selecting just a few of them on the basis of some narrow dogmatism, this cry would of course be justified, but this is not the case. There is a world of difference between the Socialist and the non-Socialist positions. The SPGB is set up to work for a single Socialist object within a political programme which of necessity has to see a socialist majority capture, through parliamentary action, the machinery of government. Once the machinery of government has been taken away from the capitalist class capitalism can be replaced with Socialism.

We therefore have no alluring reform measures to build up a paper membership of non-Socialists wanting the reforms but not Socialism. We ask those who want to join us to accept and be able to defend both the Socialist object and the principles through which the object can be attained. It is all or nothing. There are plenty of other political parties catering for every conceivable reform measure, political groups such as the WRP, Scargill's SLP and others, all of them futile, all of them incapable of bringing about a Socialist revolution.

The experience of this century has shown that capitalism cannot be withered away by a succession of reform measures. Nor had the Trotskyist idea of electing left wing governments in order to show their futility had the slightest success as the pathetic example of Militant in Liverpool during the 1980's showed. The inevitable disillusionment with Labour governments has never led to a move further Left; instead Tory governments have been returned. Workers who support capitalism, as the majority still do, are not prepared to take a chance on what are correctly seen by most as Impractical reform schemes. The SPGB through its membership test ensures that it does not go down this futile road which leads to apathy and despair.

The membership test has real advantages. It helps to ensure unity: since only committed Socialists can become Party members, the Party does not suffer from frequent splits. Moreover, a party whose members are all

agreed on the Party's aim and on how this can be achieved, as a matter of principle, is not an attractive target for those political parasites who practise entryism, taking over existing organisations and diverting them to suit their own purposes. What's more, since ours is a party without leaders or the led, where all members have an equal say in deciding party policy, the membership test is necessary to ensure that this party remains a Socialist party, working democratically for the ending of capitalism. We have no intention of joining RSN, the SWP, Class War and similar Left factions in their incoherent protests and demonstrations against specific unpopular features of capitalism. That is the dishonest politics of opportunism, and is easily seen through by intelligent men and women of the working class.

The charge of "*sectarianism*" is one we can live with: it is easily seen for what it is, the smear-tactics of those who have no valid or sound argument against the Socialist case of the SPGB.

The Class Struggle

The modern class struggle presents two aspects. On the one side the struggle to sell labour-power under the best conditions - the industrial struggle for wages and hours of labour; on the other side the struggle for the overthrow of the wages system - the political struggle for Socialism. The un - class conscious worker takes part in the former but only the class conscious takes part in the latter.

The class struggle is, therefore, both industrial and political - the latter being its ultimate, its revolutionary form.

Socialist Standard, Nov. 1920

THE RATE OF PROFIT AND EXPLOITATION.

Marx wrote extensively on both the rate of profit and the rate of exploitation. Regarding the falling rate of profit, due to increased productivity and the growth of fixed capital, Marx commented that the real problem for the economist was why *this fall was not greater and more rapid*. Evidently there must be "*counteracting influences*" at work, going against this general law, and for this reason *we have referred to the fall of the average rate of profit as a tendency to fall*. Capital Vol. III chap. XIV

The chief factor leading to a fall in the rate of profit arises from the tendency of the composition of capital to change in the direction that for every £1,000,000 capital invested a larger part takes the form of constant capital (raw resources, machinery, building and transport) and a smaller part variable capital (wages and salaries). Marx illustrated this (see chapter XIII, **Capital Volume III**) by showing how, with the same rate of exploitation and the same amount of surplus value, the rate of profit on a capital of low composition would be 50% and a capital of higher composition 20%.

In Chapter XIV of **Capital Volume III** Marx listed some counteracting influences to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. The first of which was increasing the intensity of exploitation, for example, by extracting more surplus value from the workers.

But the capitalist cannot increase the intensity of exploitation simply because he wants to. He has to take into account the degree of resistance the workers can put up. Marx dealt with this in Chapter XIV of **Wages, Price and Profit**. He showed that the actual rate of profit:

... is only settled by the continuous struggle between capitalist and labourer, the capitalist constantly tending to reduce wages to their physical minimum and to extend the working day to its physical limit, while the working man constantly presses in the opposite direction. The matter resolves itself into a question of the respective powers of the combatants.

That this is not just an academic question was shown by Engels in his 1892 Preface to **The Condition of the Working Class in England** where he pointed out that in the last 50 years the factory workers *"are undoubtedly better off"* and that the condition of the workers organised in trade unions *"has remarkably improved since 1848"*.

A glance at chapter XIV of **Capital Volume III** will show that some of the influences listed by Marx as tending to check the fall in the rate of profit are still operating.

It should also be borne in mind that in dealing with the rate of profit Marx was concerned with the workers in the productive sphere where alone value is created. This should not be confused with the different question of the proportion of annual national income received by the whole working class. In Chapter II, of **Wages, Price and Profit** Marx accepted the possibility that at that time 80% of the population received only 33% of the national income. Even if that figure exaggerated the actual degree of inequality, it is undoubtedly true that 80% of the population in this country now receive a larger proportion of national income than when Marx wrote.

By 1972, 80 percent of the population received 57.3% (Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth). The Annual Abstract of Statistics and Monthly Digests inform us that the income of the working class (including the self-employed) had risen to 74.5% in 1983, was 75.4% in 1993 and 73.1% in 1994 (the latest published figures available in 1996).

Whilst these figures may not be directly comparable, taken over a long period they represent a considerable improvement for the working class as a whole, and despite periodic depressions and unemployment, the effectiveness of trade union organisation.

However, as Marx concluded in **Wages, Price and Profit**:

(the working class) ... ought ... not to be exclusively absorbed in ... unavoidable guerrilla fights incessantly springing up from the never ceasing encroachments of capital or changes in the market. They ought

to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society.

For Marx this meant conscious political action for the establishment of Socialism.

Confused about Class

The Labour Party's Deputy leader, John Prescott, caused a bit of light relief when, in an interview, he told a reporter he was *middle class*."

This came as news to his father. When interviewed next day, Mr Prescott's father said he was working class, and so were all the family. All the Prescotts - he thought - are and always have been working class.

Perhaps said a journalist, there's a problem of definition. So Mr Prescott (senior), when asked what he meant by "*working class*", spelt it out. Working class, he said, means anyone who works for a living. Then he added: that's not so easy if you're talking of politicians in Parliament as some people say they don't work. Not so easy either if you're unemployed or retired.

Next day, the journalists got back to John Prescott, who muddled the waters still further. Apparently he sees himself as "*working class*", but with a *middle class lifestyle*."

Perhaps "*middle class*" really means simply "*muddle class*"?

For Prescott and his like, class has nothing to do with property ownership, economics and power, everything to do with status. Questions of class interest, class exploitation and class struggle are replaced with trivial questions. Do you holiday in Benidorm or Provence? Do you use private or state schooling for your children? And do you drop your "*aitches*"?

Of course Mr Prescott's idea of class tells you nothing about who owns the means for producing social wealth and for what purpose. And it conveniently hides the existence of a class who do not work but parasitically live off the work of the rest of us: the capitalist class.

SOCIALISM WILL END WAR

At eleven O'clock on the eleventh of November workers were asked to stop work and observe two minutes silence for the dead and injured in two world wars and numerous other conflicts. The silence is supposed to be a mark of respect for those who died for *"king and country"*, *"democracy and freedom"* and *"our traditional way of life"*.

For socialists the two minutes silence is a grotesque fabrication of the truth. Those who died, members of the working class, died, not for the reasons given above but for the interests of British capitalism and the class interests of a small minority who own the means to life.

Workers do not own capital. Workers have no trade routes to protect, no spheres of influence to entertain and no raw resources to defend. All the working class possess is its ability to sell to an employer its mental and physical ability to work. It is the capitalists' planet divided-up into competing nation states. Periodically competition breaks out into war.

However, you will not find the capitalist class fighting the capitalist class from another nation state. Oil barons in the USA did not send a card to Saddam Hussain asking him to meet them for a fight outside the United Nations to resolve the dispute over oil which led to his invasion of Kuwait. To fight their wars for them capitalists, through their politicians and governments, use the working class.

So why do workers fight for the interests of another class? The answer is quite simple. Workers are taught from an early age, through a subtle process of propaganda, that the class interests of workers and employers within a nation state are identical. Workers are persuaded that they have a "stake" in the country they reside in. In other words, the political immaturity of workers is exploited by journalists, academics and politicians in order to entice workers to throw their lot in with the aims and objectives of the employers. Workers, with no understanding of the social system they live under, become the prey of political charlatans. They are seduced into taking up arms or supporting war, and this seduction costs workers their lives.

It is the capitalist class who own resources like oil. Workers do not own coal mines, fishing zones, and mineral deposits. Workers do not own the shipping which transports the raw resources from one part of the world

to the other. And workers do not own the industry, plant and machinery which transforms resources, through the exploitation of the labour-power, into saleable commodities. Workers do not even own what they produce. It is all owned by capitalists and protected by their governments.

Marx pointed out, rightly, that *"the working class have no country"*. By this he meant that being propertyless and owning no means of production workers have no interest, economically or politically, in what goes on within them. The interest of nation states is the interest of the capitalist class. Workers in one part of the world have identical class interests with workers living somewhere else.

Workers who understand capitalism know that to fight in wars is not in their class interests. What is in their class interests is to establish socialism; the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production by all of society. It is only with the abolition of capitalism, class society, buying and selling and nation states that wars will no longer occur. Only the establishment of socialism can guarantee no more war.

Workers of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains.

Capitalism claims 18 million lives since 1945.

Nearly 18 million people were killed in wars and other armed conflicts between the end of the Second World War in 1945 to 1994 according to a study by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

The study showed that 10,371,000 died in East Asia, including two million in the Vietnam War, three million in Korea and one million from Pol Pot massacres in Cambodia. The toll from other regions include 2,857,000 in Central and South Asia, 2,685,000 in sub-Saharan Africa, 447,000 in Latin America, 186,000 in Europe, 108,000 in North Africa and 972,000 in the Middle East.

The report said that the Middle East and North Africa remained the largest arms market in the world, with deliveries of *"major conventional weapons systems"* at a high level in 1996 and 1997 as a result of orders made three or four years ago.

The greatest importer of defence(sic) equipment in 1996 was Saudi Arabia with nearly \$9 billion (£5.6 billion), which was almost three times more than Egypt, the second largest importer.

From the Times, October 15th 1997.

COMRADE KEN KNIGHT

Obituary

We regret to report the death of yet another of our members - Ken Knight. He died in hospital on Wednesday 5th November 1997 in his 75th year.

During the war, Ken had been drafted into the R.A.F. and the government, wishing to provide their troops with a wider understanding of what the war was about, laid on a series of lectures, known as current affairs. At one of these lectures, he met someone who had been a member of the party and who certainly had a different interpretation of events to that of the official lecturer. After much discussion, Ken was convinced of the validity of the socialist case, and joined the SPGB in 1943. He became a member of the Old Leyton branch, where work was soon found for a willing pair of hands, including the sale of many copies of the Socialist Standard. A few years later he resigned from the party due to a conflict between his personal and political commitments, but he was still around at meetings etc.

He later rejoined the party and was one of those who brought socialist propaganda to Hertfordshire. He was one of the founders and mainstays of the mid-Herts Branch, actively engaged in outdoor meetings in Stevenage and lectures and discussions in Welwyn Garden City. At the party's Clapham H.Q. his talents were used in many posts. He was General Secretary of the party for a period; Secretary of Central Branch which brought him into contact with many members who were a lone voice in the field of propaganda. He served on the 'Forms A' scrutiny committee, dealing with applications for membership from those who did not live close to a branch. He was elected on to the Executive Committee for many years.

He was a stickler for working democratically within the rules of the party and was not prepared to cut corners. With Ken, you knew where you stood; he spoke his mind and didn't fudge the issues. For him, issues of principle mattered, and as a result he became the object of some vicious verbal attacks from certain members of the Clapham party.

When we reconstituted the SPGB in June 1991 he was at the inaugural meeting and remained an active member up to the time of his death; he was at the North West London branch meeting just a couple of days before he died.

He was always very enthusiastic and thorough in all he did; in his lectures, articles for Socialist Studies and assistance with pamphlets. He corresponded with a number of enquirers, both here and overseas, and took infinite pains in replying to their questions and explaining the party case.

He was 'custodian' of our audio tapes library - some 90 titles in all, and he and his wife would spend many hours making copies to meet orders sent in by members and readers of our journal.

For nearly 30 years he was a lecturer at Hatfield Polytechnic and became secretary of his local trade union branch. He had a wide range of other interests, enjoyed a game of golf and would travel miles to watch a game of Rugby League football.

We shall miss him in particular at N.W. London branch, and in the wider range of party activities.

To his wife Jean, his daughters, his last remaining sister and other family members, we offer our condolences.

FURTHER LITERATURE AVAILABLE

Socialist Studies - our official journal

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71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB
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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH

meets at 7.30 pm on the 1st Monday in the month at
Abbey Community Centre, Belsize Road, London NW6.

Secretary C. May, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road,
London N12 8SB

CAMDEN / BLOOMSBURY BRANCH

meets at 6 pm on the 4th Tuesday of month at
Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, WC1

Correspondence to the Secretary, S.P.G.B., 31 Caernarvon Road,
Eynsbury, St. Neots, Cambs. PE19 2RN (Tel: 01480 403345)

All meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome.

Those wishing to find out more about the Party and its activities
should contact the Secretary.

1998 LECTURE LIST

Sunday 25 January LABOUR IN POWER Speaker: C. May

Sunday 8 February
WELFARE SYSTEMS

From Poor Law to Pensions Speaker: C. Skelton

Sunday 22 February
MARXISM AND THE SINGLE CURRENCY Speaker: J. D'Arcy

Sunday 8 March
UNEMPLOYMENT - A global problem Speaker: R. Lloyd

Sunday 22 March
THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO - 1848
Its relevance to 1998 Speaker: T. D'Arcy

Sundays 5th and 26th April to be announced

Venue:

Marchmont Community Centre,
62 Marchmont Street, London WC1.
(5 minutes Russell Square Tube Station.)
Commence 3 p.m.

Questions. Discussion.